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CURRENT AMERICAN LITERATURE.

BRAZIL having been a steadily progressive country throughout the long reign of Dom Pedro II., a fresh account* of it by an American observer was decidedly required. The books by Wallace and by Fletcher are probably out of print, and certainly out of date; the journey, whose results were recorded by Prof. and Mrs. Agassiz, was made more than twenty-one years ago; and even Dr. Smith's visit, which furnished material for an interesting narrative, took place in 1875. The author of the book before us, on the contrary, has but recently returned from Rio de Janeiro, where he spent three years in the post of Consul-General. His own opportunities of observation were remarkable, and these were supplemented with information industriously collected from men residing in almost every province of the Empire, with whom he was brought into intimate relations during their terms of sojourn in the capital. His purpose was, he tells us, to answer every question which an intelligent American would be likely to ask, and there is, in fact, no aspect of Brazilian society on which some light has not been thrown. We have found the chapters upon the Amazon Valley and upon the emancipation problem particularly full and useful. He confirms, with new and cumulative evidence, the assertion first made by Wallace, that there is no foundation for the current notion, to which, it will be remembered, Buckle gave forcible expression, that, in the Valley of the Amazon, the luxuriance of the vegetation has overpowered and daunted man. As a matter of fact, the primeval forest of the American equatorial region "can be converted into rich pasture and meadow land, cultivated field and garden, with half the labor and with less than half the time required" in temperate zones. It is even a mistake to suppose that the Valley of the Amazon is abundantly supplied with the means of subsistence. It seems to be as true to-day as it was when Mrs. Agassiz wrote, that "neither milk, nor butter, nor vegetables, nor cheese are to be had. You constantly hear people complaining of the difficulty of procuring even the commonest articles of domestic consumption." The history of the emancipation movement in Brazil has been clearly and concisely sketched by Mr. Andrews. He shows how the law of 1871, which declared all slave children, born after its promulgation, free at the age of twenty-one, has, in practice, been evaded by the frequent, and, in some sections, preconcerted failure to register births. Of the minors legally entitled to the benefit of the law, no returns at all have been received from seven provincial governments, including those of such large and populous provinces as those of Bahia, Sao Paulo, and Minas-Geraes. The latest phase of the long struggle between the slave-holders and emancipationists is depicted in detail from the abortive project of the Dantas Ministry to the successful passage of the Saraiva bill, in September, 1885. The main feature of this important legislation is the provision for a new and compulsory registration of all slaves under sixty years of age. It should also be noted that while slaves between sixty and sixty-five were to be held to labor for three years, those above sixty-five were declared emanci-

* Brazil, by C. C. Andrews, ex-Consul-General at Rio de Janeiro. D. Appleton & Co.

pated, and every slave not registered within a fixed time was to be *ipso facto* free. There was also a merciful provision that all freedmen over sixty should remain with their masters to be fed, clothed, and cared for at the latter's expense, provided the Orphans' Court should pronounce the freedmen unable to earn their living. As the law also largely increased the Emancipation fund by an annual appropriation of two and a half million dollars, there is at last reason to believe that the process of extinguishing African slavery in its last stronghold is fairly under way. Still, as the number of slaves in the Empire was nearly a million and a quarter two years ago, Mr. Andrews foresees that Americans will continue to drink coffee produced by slave labor for a quarter of a century longer.

It was understood, when the purchase of the collection was recommended to Congress, that the Stevens papers, now deposited in the library of the State Department at Washington, included a great many letters written by Franklin during his residence in France that had never seen the light. Not only are the most important of these unpublished documents made known to us by Mr. Hale,* but their relation to circumstances is brought out by retelling the whole story of Franklin's experience in France. Mr. Hale's work, therefore, far from being confined to the mere act of editing, is an independent history, which, while providing students with new and valuable evidence, winningly commends itself to a popular audience like that to which the biography by Parton was addressed. Students, perhaps, will not be overmuch pleased to learn that Franklin's mistakes in orthography have been corrected by the editor, but the general reader will relish the letters all the more, because he has been spared the trouble of translating bad English or bad French. A feature of this book is the attention paid to Franklin's earlier visits to Paris in 1767 and 1769, about which his other biographers have, for one reason or another, said but little. As to the first journey in particular, Franklin himself maintained great reticence, mentioned it to no one in America, except his son in New Jersey, and cautions even him against letting others know of it. The contemporary English newspapers seem to have been unaware that Franklin had accompanied Sir John Pringle to Paris. The only surviving record of this visit in Franklin's handwriting is a letter to a Miss Stevenson, treating chiefly of the modes of traveling in France, the fashions in dress, and his own presentation at court, where, it seems, the King, Louis XV., took some notice of him. Franklin recounts an incident, which, at first sight, seems trivial enough, but which, as the editor points out, was, in its way, a portent, namely, that the game at cards known as quadrille had already been superseded at Versailles and Paris by the English whist. Spades, as Mr. Hale reminds us, represented the soldier class, while the other three suits corresponded to the ecclesiastics, town folk, and peasantry. "When, therefore, the fashion of the court changed so far that the ace of spades [which in quadrille was the highest card, no matter what might be trumps] could not always take the ace of clubs or of hearts, or of diamonds, the King of France should have known that even the chief [of a military noblesse] was no longer supreme above the demands of clergy, merchants, and people. English whist came as an omen of constitutional government." We have quoted Mr. Hale's allusion to this matter, which most editors would have dismissed as insignificant, to show how searching and illuminative his comments are. Of Franklin's second visit to Paris, in July, 1769, there is even less to be learned from his letters to American correspondents. As we know that Franklin was received with the utmost cordiality by the French economists, among whom Quesnay and the Marquis of Mirabeau were the most

* Franklin in France, by Edward E. Hale and E. E. Hale, Jr. Roberts Brothers.

conspicuous figures, the studious and very unusual silence maintained by Franklin suggests to the editor that he must have had some political plans in view. Mr. Hale notes the interesting fact that only a year or two before Franklin's visit, Adam Smith had formed that personal acquaintance with Quesnay to which we are undoubtedly indebted for "The Wealth of Nations." Mr. Hale brings down the story of Franklin's life in France to the close of 1781, the year of Yorktown. A question of particular interest relates to the extent of Franklin's prevision of the French Revolution, which was to begin only eight years later. We have found no proof in the letters printed in this volume that he foresaw the dissolution of the Bourbon monarchy. We encounter no criticism, even of a friendly kind, on the shocking fiscal blunders of the Ancien Régime, to which we might have expected a man of Franklin's businessaptitudes to be specially alive. When Marie Antoinette herself was partner in a faro bank, it might have been supposed that Franklin would have been impressed by some of the thousand indications that the state was drifting fast toward bankruptcy. The general effect produced on the mind by this correspondence is that, while Franklin's cordial reception by the philosophers was of service to his country, and made him an efficient agent for the immediate end in view, yet his observations were confined to superficial phenomena, and there was absolutely nothing of the prophet in him.

Although Mr. Laurence Oliphant is an Englishman, his letters* descriptive of life in modern Palestine may, from one point of view, be considered to belong to American literature, since they were first published in the *New York Sun*, and are now only accessible in a collective form to the readers of the volume edited by Mr. Charles A. Dana. The observations here recorded are those, not of a visitor, but of a resident, of a man, too, who can interpret the present by the past, because, without professing to be a professional archaeologist or philologist, he is thoroughly conversant with the results of recent archaeological and philological research. Mr. Oliphant speaks from a full mind, and his pen moves with the vivacity and the exactitude of a long-practiced writer. The reader will thank us for directing his attention to the topics of peculiar interest discussed in chapters on "the Sea of Galilee in the Time of Christ," "The Scene of the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes," "Capernaum and Chorazin," and "Traditional Sites at Jerusalem." But, perhaps, we cannot better illustrate in this passing notice the charm and value of the combined results of patient personal inspection and of extensive scholarship, than by marking some of the data brought out in two chapters on the "Sacred Samaritan Records" and "The Ten Lost Tribes." How few of the persons, who suppose themselves tolerably well informed about the history and the present state of Palestine, are aware that at Nablous lingers to this day a remnant of the Samaritans, though it now numbers no more than one hundred and sixty souls. The author may well pronounce this remarkable community, considered as an ethnological survival of antiquity, the most interesting group of people extant. In their synagogue, Mr. Oliphant was allowed to see their ancient Torah, or book of the law, which, as these Samaritans believe, preserves the most authentic text of the Mosaic injunctions, as they were expounded and obeyed when the whole nation of the Israelites still worshiped on Mount Gerizim. Of the three other sacred books known to be in the possession of the Samaritans, the author points out that one, the Samaritan book of Joshua, fills a notable lacuna in the Judaic book of the same name, and furnishes an account of the conquest of Samaria, which, it will be remembered, is lacking in the record transmitted in the Hebrew Bible. We should add that in

* *Haifa, or Life in Modern Palestine*, edited with introduction by Charles A. Dana. Harper and Brothers.

the second of the two chapters now under our eye, Mr. Oliphant gives cogent reasons for believing that the Samaritans of the times of Christ and of Josephus were the lineal representatives of the ten tribes mistakenly described as "lost." There is, indeed, an inherent probability in Mr. Oliphant's suggestion that Sargon's treatment of the conquered Israelites would correspond to Nebuchadnezzar's subsequent treatment of Judah and Benjamin ; that is to say, he would carry off the rich and influential families, and leave behind the poorer classes, who were not worth deportation. It appears, too, that, according to a Samaritan tradition, not less than three hundred thousand exiles, belonging to the ten tribes, and representing their sacerdotal and social aristocracy, returned under Sanballat to Gerizim at the same time when the descendants of the captives, who had been thought worthy of conveyance to Babylon, repaired, under Zerubbabel, to Jerusalem.

Of the five volumes* edited by Messrs. Matthews and Hutton, three, at all events, may be classed with propriety under American literature, since the authors of the several biographies contained in them are, as a rule, Americans, and since the subjects, for the most part, spent the largest, or at least the most successful part of their professional careers on the American stage. When we mention that the sketch of the elder Booth was drawn by his celebrated son, that the memoirs of Edwin Booth himself, of Edwin Forrest, and of Macready, were penned by Mr. Lawrence Barrett, and that the lives of James W. and Lester Wallack and of John McCullough are depicted by Mr. William Winter, we have said enough to indicate the care taken by the editors to secure not only competent, but sympathetic delineation. Among the scores of contributions from well nigh as many hands which make up these five volumes, there is not one which is not readable, or which fails to give the precise sort of information which the reader of the book expects. But we should not omit, in the most cursory notice, to recognize the high literary level reached by the articles on Frances Kemble, on Mr. Lawrence Barrett, on Mr. Joseph Jefferson, and upon Miss Ellen Terry.

Although Mr. Heilprin's portrayal of the past and present dissemination of animals† is not, of course, a contribution to literature, it is an American contribution to science, and, therefore, may claim notice here. Besides, in the application of technical acquirements to the special end in view, the author has exhibited the literary qualities of well-ordered arrangement and lucidity, and has, therefore, carried out the popularizing purpose of the series to which his volume appertains. There are books, no doubt, like that of Mr. Wallace, which deal efficiently with the geographical distribution of living species, and there are other books which offer a tolerably exhaustive conspectus of palæontological data. The specific merit of this work is the collocation of both classes of facts, which, of course, powerfully help to interpret one another. By way of exemplifying the light cast by the study of fossils on the evolution and characters of existing types, we would particularly draw the reader's attention to Mr. Heilprin's account of the horse, the dog, the cat, and the higher varieties of anthropoid apes, which are collectively known as troglodytes. The author has no occasion within the limits of his inquiry to declare his opinion regarding the descent of man, and his reticence upon the subject will expand rather than contract the field of his essay's usefulness in our schools and colleges.

* *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States.* Edited by Brander Matthews and Laurence Hutton. 5 vols. Cassell & Co.

† *The Geographical and Geological Distribution of Animals*, by Angelo Heilprin. International Scientific Series. D. Appleton & Co.